

From my [op-ed](#) today in the Mercury News

This past December, Santa Clara County health officials held their collective breaths when they learned that a tuberculosis-infected passenger had traveled from overseas to her Sunnyvale home, possibly infecting other passengers along the way. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) then had to race against the clock to identify 44 other passengers from 16 states who sat close to her.

But this case, one of several in the Bay Area last year, was the least of many worries for Dr. Marty Fenstersheib, acting director of Santa Clara County's Health Department. He vividly described to me how funding cuts from the state, outdated federal funding criteria and expensive treatment are the biggest hurdles in the county's battle against tuberculosis.

This is a serious battle: Between 2005 and 2007, our county's TB cases increased 21 percent, while they dropped statewide. The average state and federal funding for the county's efforts remained essentially flat, until this year when it was cut.

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